WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1.   A casino gaming system comprising:

at least one master gaming server,

at least one gaming apparatus disposed in a casino, said gaming apparatus comprising: a display unit capable of generating video images, a value input device and a gaming apparatus controller comprising a processor and a memory operatively coupled to said processor,

said gaming apparatus controller being programmed to receive gaming server identification data from said master gaming server, said gaming server identification data representing the identity of each gaming server of a plurality of gaming servers,

said gaming apparatus controller being programmed to communicate a network message to each of said gaming servers using said gaming server identification data, said network message comprising a type identifier and data unique to said network message,

said gaming apparatus controller being programmed to receive a response to said network message from one or more of said plurality of gaming servers,

said gaming apparatus controller being programmed to determine data representing server information regarding each of said responding gaming servers based at least in part on said response,

said gaming apparatus controller being programmed to select a gaming server from among said plurality of gaming servers according to said server information data,

said gaming apparatus controller being programmed to communicate a selection message to said selected gaming server,

said gaming apparatus controller being programmed to receive gaming data from said selected gaming server in response to said selection message,

said gaming apparatus controller being programmed to cause a video image to be generated on said display unit, said video image representing a game, and

said gaming apparatus controller being programmed to determine a value payout associated with an outcome of said game represented by said video image; and

a plurality of gaming servers interconnected with said at least one gaming apparatus and said at least one master gaming server, wherein at least one of said plurality of gaming servers is disposed in a casino, each gaming server comprising a gaming server controller comprising a processor and a memory operatively coupled to said processor;

said gaming server controller being programmed to receive said network message from said gaming apparatus controller,

said gaming server controller being programmed to communicate a response to said network message to said gaming apparatus controller if said network message is received,

said gaming server controller being programmed to receive a selection message from said gaming apparatus controller, and

said gaming server controller being programmed to communicate said gaming data to said gaming apparatus controller if said gaming server controller receives said selection message.

2.   A gaming system as defined in claim 1, wherein said gaming apparatus controller is programmed to determine one of the following server information data based at least in part on said response: a data transfer rate, responsiveness, identification or load.

3.   A gaming system as defined in claim 1 further comprising at least one network computer interconnected with said gaming apparatus, said master gaming server and said plurality of gaming servers,

wherein said gaming apparatus controller is programmed to request a network identification from said network computer using data identifying said gaming apparatus,

wherein said gaming apparatus controller is programmed to receive a network identification from said network computer if said gaming apparatus identification is valid,

wherein said gaming server controller is programmed to determine if said network identification is valid, and

wherein said gaming server controller is programmed to provide said gaming data if said network identification is valid.

4.   A gaming system as defined in claim 1,

wherein said gaming apparatus controller is programmed to record a first time when each network message is communicated to each of said gaming servers,

wherein said gaming apparatus is programmed to record a second time when each of said responses is received, and

wherein said gaming apparatus is programmed to determine said server information data for each of said responding gaming servers based on said first time and said second time.

5.   A gaming system as defined in claim 1, wherein said gaming apparatus controller is programmed to receive server information data from said master gaming server.

6.   A gaming apparatus disposed in a casino, the gaming apparatus comprising:

a display unit;

a value input device;

a controller operatively coupled to said display unit and said value input device, said controller comprising a processor and a memory operatively coupled to said processor,

said controller being programmed to receive data representing server information regarding a plurality of casino gaming servers,

said controller being programmed to organize said plurality of casino gaming servers, wherein said controller organizes said plurality of casino gaming servers according to said server information data,

said controller being programmed to select a casino gaming server from among said plurality of casino gaming servers, wherein said controller makes said selection according to one of the following:

said organization of casino gaming servers or said server information data,

said controller being programmed to receive gaming data from said selected casino gaming server,

5   said controller being programmed to cause said display unit to generate a game display relating to one of the following games: poker, blackjack, slots, keno or bingo, and

said controller being programmed to determine a value payout associated with an outcome of said game.

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7.   A gaming apparatus as defined in claim 6, wherein said display unit comprises a video display unit that is capable of generating video images.

8.   A gaming apparatus as defined in claim 7,

15   wherein said controller is programmed to cause a video image comprising an image of at least five playing cards to be displayed if said game comprises video poker,

wherein said controller is programmed to cause a video image comprising an image of a plurality of simulated slot machine reels to be displayed if said game

20 comprises video slots,

wherein said controller is programmed to cause a video image comprising an image of a plurality of playing cards to be displayed if said game comprises video blackjack,

wherein said controller is programmed to cause a video image comprising an

25 image of a plurality of keno numbers to be displayed if said game comprises video keno, and

wherein said controller is programmed to cause a video image comprising an image of a bingo grid to be displayed if said game comprises video bingo.

30   9.   A gaming apparatus as defined in claim 6, wherein said display unit comprises at least one mechanical slot machine reel.

10.   A gaming apparatus as defined in claim 6, wherein said controller is programmed to cause said display unit to generate a

display relating to one or more of said plurality of casino gaming servers,

wherein said controller is programmed to allow a person to select one of said casino gaming servers from among said one or more casino gaming servers.

5   11.   A gaming apparatus as defined in claim 10, wherein said controller is programmed to cause said display unit to generate a display relating to said server information data for each of said one or more casino gaming servers.

12.   A gaming apparatus as defined in claim 6, wherein said controller is
10 ,   programmed to automatically select a casino gaming server from said plurality of casino gaming servers based on said server information data.

13.   A gaming apparatus as defined in claim 6, wherein said server information data relates to at least one of the following factors for each of said
15 ·   plurality of casino gaming servers: data transfer rate, responsiveness, identification, load, geographic location, network subnet data, description, available gaming data and gaming data size.

14.   A gaming apparatus as defined in claim 6, wherein said controller is
20   programmed to discard a casino gaming server from said plurality of casino gaming servers as an option for selection based on a threshold value, said threshold value relating to at least one of the following factors: data transfer rate, responsiveness, load, geographic proximity, network subnet data, available gaming data and gaming data size.

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15.   A gaming apparatus as defined in claim 6, wherein said gaming data relates to at least one of the following games: poker, blackjack, slots, keno or bingo.

16.   A gaming apparatus as defined in claim 6, wherein said gaming data
30   relates to at least one of the following: a new game, a software update and configuration data.

17.   A gaming apparatus as defined in claim 6, wherein said controller is programmed to cause said display unit to generate said game display from said

gaming data.

18.   A gaming system comprising a plurality of gaming apparatuses as defined in claim 6, said gaming apparatuses being interconnected to form a network of gaming apparatuses.

19.   A gaming system as defined in claim 18 further comprising:

said plurality of casino gaming servers; and

a master gaming server,

wherein said controller is programmed to communicate with said master gaming server.

20.   A gaming system as defined in claim 19 further comprising a   network server,

wherein said controller is programmed to provide said network server with a gaming apparatus identification and data to authenticate said gaming apparatus identification,

wherein said controller is programmed to receive a network identification from said network server if said network server accepts said gaming apparatus identification and said data to authenticate said gaming apparatus identification, and

wherein said controller is programmed to communicate with said master gaming server using said network identification.

21.   A gaming system as defined in claim 20,

wherein said controller is programmed to receive   network   server authentication data from said network server,

wherein said controller is programmed to determine if said network server authentication data is authentic for said network server, and

wherein said controller is programmed to accept said network identification if said network server authentication data is authentic for said network server.

22.   A gaming system as defined in claim 18, wherein one or more of said plurality of gaming apparatuses is a master gaming server, wherein said controller of

said one or more gaming apparatuses is programmed to provide a list of said plurality of casino gaming servers to other gaming apparatuses.

23. A gaming system as defined in claim 18, wherein one or more of said plurality of gaming apparatuses is a casino gaming server, wherein said controller of said one or more gaming apparatuses is programmed to provide gaming data to other gaming apparatuses.

24. A gaming system as defined in claim 18, wherein said gaming apparatuses are interconnected via the Internet.

25. A gaming apparatus disposed in a casino, the gaming apparatus comprising:

a display unit;

a value input device;

a controller operatively coupled to said display unit and said value input device, said controller comprising a processor and a memory operatively coupled to said processor,

said controller being programmed to receive data representing server information regarding a plurality of casino gaming servers,

said controller being programmed to organize said plurality of casino gaming servers, wherein said controller organizes said plurality of casino gaming servers according to said server information data,

said controller being programmed to select a casino gaming server from among said plurality of casino gaming servers, wherein said controller makes said selection according to one of the following: said organization of casino gaming servers or said server information data,

said controller being programmed to receive gaming data from said selected casino gaming server,

said controller being programmed to receive data representing a payline selection made by a player,

said controller being programmed to cause a game display to be generated by said display unit, said game display comprising images of

a plurality of slot machine symbols each of which is associated with a respective slot machine reel of a slots game,

said controller being programmed to determine a value payout associated with an outcome of said slots game, said controller being programmed to determine said outcome of said slots game based on a configuration of said slot machine symbols.

26.   A gaming apparatus as defined in claim 25, wherein said display unit comprises a video display unit that is capable of generating video images.

27.   A gaming apparatus as defined in claim 26, wherein said controller is programmed to cause a video image comprising an image of a plurality of simulated slot machine reels to be displayed on said display unit.

28.   A gaming apparatus as defined in claim 25, wherein said display unit comprises at least one mechanical slot machine reel.

29.   A gaming apparatus as defined in claim 25, wherein said controller is programmed to receive payline data representing a number of paylines selected by the player.

30.   A gaming apparatus as defined in claim 25,

wherein said controller is programmed to cause said display unit to generate a display relating to one or more of said plurality of casino gaming servers,

wherein said controller is programmed to allow a person to select one of said casino gaming servers from among said one or more casino gaming servers.

31.   A gaming apparatus as defined in claim 30, wherein said controller is programmed to cause said display unit to generate a display relating to said server information data for each of said one or more gaming servers.

32.   A gaming apparatus as defined in claim 25, wherein said controller is programmed to automatically select a casino gaming server from said plurality of

casino gaming servers based on said server information data.

33.   A gaming apparatus as defined in claim 25, wherein said server information data relates to at least one of the following factors for each of said plurality of casino gaming servers: data transfer rate, responsiveness, identification, load, geographic location, network subnet data, description, available gaming data and gaming data size.

34.   A gaming apparatus as defined in claim 25, wherein said gaming data relates to at least one of the following: a new slots game, a software update and configuration data.

35.   A gaming apparatus as defined in claim 25, wherein said controller is programmed to cause said display unit to generate said game display from said gaming data.

36.   A gaming system comprising a plurality of gaming apparatuses as defined in claim 25, said gaming apparatuses being interconnected to form a network of gaming apparatuses.

37.   A gaming system as defined in claim 36 further comprising:
said plurality of casino gaming servers; and
a master gaming server,
wherein said controller is programmed to receive a list of said plurality of casino gaming servers from said master gaming server.

38.   A gaming system as defined in claim 36, wherein said gaming apparatuses are interconnected via the Internet.

39.   A gaming method for downloading gaming data from a casino gaming server to a gaming apparatus disposed in a casino, the gaming method comprising:
receiving data representing server information regarding a plurality of casino gaming servers;

organizing said plurality of casino gaming servers according to said server information data;

selecting a casino gaming server from among said plurality of casino gaming servers according to one of the following: said organization of casino gaming servers or said server information data;

receiving gaming data from said selected casino gaming server;

causing a game display of one of the following games to be generated: poker, blackjack, slots, keno or bingo; and

determining a value payout associated with an outcome of said game represented by said video image.

40.   A gaming method as defined in claim 39, additionally comprising:

causing a display relating to one or more of said plurality of casino gaming servers to be generated; and

allowing a person to select one of said casino gaming servers from among said one or more casino gaming servers.

41.   A gaming method as defined in claim 39, wherein selecting a casino gaming server comprises automatically selecting a casino gaming server from among said plurality of casino gaming servers based on said server information data.

42.   A gaming method as defined in claim 39, wherein causing a game display to be generated comprises causing a game display of one of the following games to be generated from said gaming data: poker, blackjack, slots, keno or bingo.

43.   A gaming method as defined in claim 39, wherein selecting a casino gaming server comprises selecting a casino gaming server based on at least one of the following: data transfer rate, responsiveness, identification, load, geographic location, network subnet data, description, available gaming data and gaming data size.

44.   A memory having a computer program stored therein, said computer program being capable of being used in connection with a gaming apparatus disposed in a casino, said memory comprising:

a memory portion physically configured in accordance with computer program instructions that would cause the gaming apparatus to receive data representing server information regarding a plurality of casino gaming servers;

a memory portion physically configured in accordance with computer program instructions that would cause the gaming apparatus to organize said plurality of casino gaming servers according to said server information data;

a memory portion physically configured in accordance with computer program instructions that would cause the gaming apparatus to select a casino gaming server from among said plurality of casino gaming servers according to one of the following: said organization of casino gaming servers or said server information data;

a memory portion physically configured in accordance with computer program instructions that would cause the gaming apparatus to receive gaming data from said selected casino gaming server;

a memory portion physically configured in accordance with computer program instructions that would cause the gaming apparatus to cause a game display representing one of the following games to be generated: poker, blackjack, slots, keno or bingo; and

a memory portion physically configured in accordance with computer program instructions that would cause the gaming apparatus to determine a value payout associated with an outcome of said one game.

45.   A memory as defined in claim 44, wherein said memory additionally comprises:

a memory portion physically configured in accordance with computer program instructions that would cause the gaming apparatus to cause a display relating to one or more of said plurality of casino gaming servers to be generated; and

a memory portion physically configured in accordance with computer program instructions that would cause the gaming apparatus to allow a person to select one of said casino gaming servers from among said one or more casino gaming servers.

46.   A memory as defined in claim 44, wherein said memory additionally comprises a memory portion physically configured in accordance with computer program instructions that would cause the gaming apparatus to automatically select a casino gaming server from among said plurality of casino gaming servers based on

5   said server information data.